

FROM THE MAELSTRO

IN G MINOR

"**O**F all men who emerge from prison," remarked Tredways to me on one occasion, "the most fascinating to the student of criminology are the master minds who have descended. Of all men who are shot out from that abyss, tossed up from that maelstrom, those who were once illustrious, real suns, in the intellectual or social firmaments, appeal most powerfully to our sense of the dramatic. From riches to prison. The pillar of society writhes in his shameful cell. The master of men swells in the quarries. The aristocrat toils with felons. Epic tragedies. What resurrection after that crucifixion? It is a question of absorbing interest."

When Hoga Tredways, specialist in crime, spoke in this fashion to me (his friend, the Rev. Horace Francie, chaplain of Chains Prison), I felt that he had some particular person in mind. I waited in silence.

"How often have I wished to meet that genius of finance, Walter Minshull Dresslar?" Tredways continued. "It is unlikely that I ever shall. It was years and years ago when a crisis urged him to take one step outside the pale of the law. He chanced the snap of the lion's jaws, but the jaws snapped. That was on the other side of the Atlantic, so that the case scarcely comes within our reach. I wish it did. I would give a decent sum to encounter Dresslar, who has been out some time now. But no one knows where he is. Of course not. A man of his caliber would never exhibit himself for curiosity's finger to point at."

"You, my dear Francie, bring to me, on rare occasions, men who have been in prison, whom you believe to be innocent; and I use my poor talent to clear them. But you cannot bring Dresslar. And was he innocent? He said he was. Could I roll away the stone of his supposed guilt? Impossible. It was a matter of profound finance; in that web of figures, of calculations, I should become enmeshed, choked, strangled. But, oh, how I should like to know just what that genius is doing now!"

A few weeks after Tredways had acknowledged this desire, having an hour to spare I dropped into his club. It is called the Oddments Club, and is within sound of the Piccadilly traffic. Tredways was not there, but, as I had not come to see him, it hardly mattered. There was a good sprinkling of men in the smoking room, mostly in evening clothes. I had ensconced myself in a divan chair and was reading an evening paper, when I was startled by hearing some one remark:

"Lepellier has gone under—yes. These high financiers have their day and cease to be. They swell like bubbles, beautiful, iridescent, and then—a drop of dirty water to show where they burst. That's like Lepellier now; like Walter Minshull Dresslar, who went to prison. I knew Dresslar, that is to say, I knew him for five minutes. You smile? But it was the most dramatic, the most exciting, the most poignant five minutes of my life; and that has been eventful enough."

The speaker had my attention instantly. He had been addressing a fellow member on the subject of the suicide of Lepellier, well known on the Paris bourse. Although his words were quietly spoken they were so striking as to attract the attention of many of those around about him, and the interest spread quickly. He became aware of this, and edged away from the fireplace toward a chair. That he would not be permitted to shut himself up in this shyness was evident from the expression of the others' faces; and this was soon intimated to him.

"Come on with the yarn, Standish," urged some one, immediately.

"Sorry," was the answer. "I'm afraid I went a little too far, and—"

"And you must go in with it," interrupted another. "We want to hear about the most exciting five minutes of your life."

Standish flushed uncomfortably. He had never sought the limelight at the Oddments, being a small, silent sort of man. With the others, I attempted to break down his diffidence, while I kept an eye on the door in the hope that Tredways would appear. Here was a golden chance, and I must seize it for him, that was all there was to it.

"It does not begin very much to my credit," said Standish as soon as we got him started. "It happened years and years ago. I wonder how many of us sitting here were once poor. I mean who have known the rags of want—the actual gauze of the unfed stomach? I knew them, and I remember. I am not going into details of how and why; suffice it for me to say that one night I looked through the uncurtained window of a room and saw something good to eat on a sideboard which was covered with glass and glittering silver."

"This room was in a stuccoed man-

sion, which belonged to Walter Minshull Dresslar. I knew that it belonged to him. I was there quite by accident, understand. There was a tempest of January rain and wind and I had gone inside his gateway for shelter. It was then that I saw the something good to eat on the sideboard, which weighed half a ton.

"A temptation?" Hardly that. A temptation implies a sense of doing wrong, and a struggle against it. But I experienced not the smallest prick of conscience; I underwent no fight whatever. I was starving—just that. When a man's lungs are bursting for air he gulps at any sort of atmosphere which chances to be about him; when a man is starving for food he just takes the nearest. I don't put up a defense, a justification; I state a fact.

"The sheer power of the unfed human animal drew me to the window. There were two doors in the room, and one standing open led to another room, part of which I could just see. I was wondering if any one were in there when a man came striding through the door. He walked three times round the immense dining-room table and out again through the same doorway. Suddenly he came again. Round and round he went. His face was turned to the Persian rugs upon the floor. There was as much blood in that man's face as you will find in a marble bust. He kept moving his arms up and down, his fists clenched, as if he was striking something. I saw the iron set of his jaws, the glitter of his eyes, which reflected God knows what agony tearing at his heart. Suddenly he went out again, continuing his insane promenade in the adjoining room.

"This man was Dresslar. I knew him from his photograph which had appeared in newspapers. Walter Minshull Dresslar, the financier. I remembered recent whispers of his difficulties. Evidently those whispers did not lie. Here was a man who found himself on the edge of Tophet, on the lip of the gulf.

"I remember a grim sort of chuckle rising to my lips. I, too, had been a speculator in a small way. Here was another of them; foremost of his time; one of the great gilded gamblers of New York city; here was the prismatic bubble about to become a splash of dirty water."

The speaker paused, struck by his own bitterness of tone, checked by his own eloquence, self-consciousness returning. Some one handed him a cigar case.

At this juncture I noticed, with the merest flicker of casual interest, a stranger standing by a pillar well outside the group of listening men. Half in shadow, he leaned against the marble column and smoked a cigarette. It was only the fact that he was a new member of the Oddments—to me at least—which drew my momentary attention.

The voice of Standish came again.

"Dresslar did not reappear in the dining room; but then he might have done so at any moment. He was, as I said, in the adjoining room, the door of which was a trifle ajar. Possibly he had dropped into a chair there, or flung himself on a sofa. I tried one of the dining-room windows. They had not been locked for the night, and it yielded to my pressure. I pushed it higher and higher, making no sound. What did I mean to do? I meant to snatch a meal from the sideboard; that is to say, I was obeying the call of hunger, of starvation. And if there is any man here who has not known that call, he is altogether incompetent to sit in judgment on the case.

"The wind roared through the window I had opened and blew the curtains inward. I climbed to the sill. It was a ticklish proposition. I did not want more than five or ten seconds without interruption; but then Dresslar might come out again before one or them had passed."

I listened intently for any sign of his reappearance. Some one was playing a piano in a room above. I did not know that strange, that bizarre melody, at the time. I was scarcely aware that it penetrated my consciousness; yet I recognized it when I heard it two years later at a grand concert. It was "The Ballade," in G minor, by Chopin.

"I got one leg across the sill of the window, then the other. Now or never! I dropped lightly into the room. The sideboard was a dozen paces distant. I had covered half of them when Dresslar came raging into the room again.

"I received a terrible shock. I had thought myself a desperate man, but if the pluck of desperation had been mine I confess that it ebbed suddenly and left me ghastly afraid.

"For a moment or two Dresslar did not see me. He came striding round the table and I was on the safe side of it. Had I dived underneath I should surely have saved myself; but a paralysis of terror kept me crouching down, every nerve benumbed."

"Suddenly he walked right into me.

He staggered; he almost fell. I rose from my stooping posture. Physical weakness combined with fear had sapped my strength to such an extent that I held on to the table's edge for support. As soon as Dresslar recovered his balance he leaped at me in a fury, caught me by the throat, shook me until my senses swam in a dark sea, pitched me clean across the room and rushed to the phone which was in a corner by the open window.

"He was about to call up the police.

"I staggered to my feet, feeling horribly sick and faint. My one thought was escape. To reach the open window I must pass Dresslar. He let go the phone receiver to intercept me. He was frightfully white and his eyes blazed.

"Stand back, you dog" he snarled. "I thought he was going to murder me.

"The pianist overhead was commencing that wonderful climax of the ballade, which is one rush of vehement passion. I fell upon my knees.

"For God Almighty's sake have mercy, Mr. Dresslar!" I besought him. "I am starving. I swear to you I am no common thief. Don't call in the police! Don't, Mr. Dresslar, don't!"

Again Standish paused, for again his emotion had borne him off his feet. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his palms. A slight movement on the part of the new member standing alone by the Corinthian pillar attracted my gaze toward him for the fraction of a second. He was evidently as keenly interested, as deeply moved, as the rest of us.

Standish himself was much agitated. He looked at us in a nervous sort of fashion as if trying to read our opinion of him in our faces. What he saw was only reassuring, however, and he soon continued.

"I am afraid I presented a rather pitiable kind of object to Dresslar, and God knows how many more entreaties for pity I poured out. Suddenly I saw a change come over his face. His pallid fury altered to an expression of shame. I interpreted it correctly, I believe. He had let himself get out of control. He had permitted himself to find in the incident of my intrusion a vent for the storm of his passion which was wholly unworthy of him. His agony on account of the ruin which had been inflicted on him by the machinations of his rivals he had concentrated in a white-hot burst of rage upon my wretched self. Suddenly he perceived this, perceived it with scorn, and was master of his mood again.

"Get outside!" said he, abruptly calm. He swung round on his heel and crossed over to the fireplace, looking down into the flames with eyes suddenly exhausted with the exhaustion of utter weariness.

"I made for the open window. I felt the relief which a man feels when a pair of strangling hands are removed from his windpipe. I was just about to vanish when Dresslar looked up, snapping his fingers to claim my attention. From his breast-pocket he drew a leather case, and from this he jerked a greenback, which he crumpled slightly and flung at me.

"—And be damned!" he added, completing his command.

"One minute later I was on the public road. My wits were scattered. The arctic wind freezing my sweating forehead hardly seemed real. I examined what was clenched in my palm; it was a twenty-dollar bill."

The narrator paused while his eyes gathered all our attention, then he added, with dramatic emphasis:

"That money, gentlemen, flung in contemptuous pity to a starving man, was Walter Minshull Dresslar's last speculation."

A youthful and excited listener let a cheer escape him. Standish wiped his hot forehead. Presumably his story was over. It had been as frank as it was telling. Not every man would care to relate an episode like that out of his own life, even if it had happened years and years before. But Standish was now a man of fortune, which wrapped the episode in a golden mist.

"His last speculation?" echoed one of us, inquiringly.

"Sure," answered Standish smilingly. "On the following day news of Dresslar's arrest startled the world. We know the end. For a man with his soul it was the most frightful of terminations. He changed his marble palace for a prison cell. After that, what became of Walter Dresslar? Now that question has for me a dire interest, which I should like to explain to you."

This attracted our attention afresh. The story was not finished. The new member leaning against the pillar, who had seemed about to step forward, changed his mind and lighted another cigarette.

"It is this," went on the narrator, gravely, arousing our interest by a slow and careful choice of his words. "At the zenith of Dresslar's power he used to give the reins to chance. In the full flush of his amazing luck he made fortunes; his dice, and his throws were staggering. But I much doubt if he made a luckier toss—though not for himself—than when he pitched that twenty dollars in my face. For, gentlemen, it was that

he had served with felons? Precious little. He had risen again, of course but the past was the past. Some of us would not care a fig about that, but the majority would. In that case it would be hard on Dresslar if Standish was going to give him away. Confoundedly hard.

The narrator leaned forward, lowering his voice to a still quieter pitch. "Yes, he is here," he continued. "Moreover, I think he has been listen-



which was literally the stone on which my future fortune was founded. One day I may tell you its history, but not now. What I mean to impress upon you is the fact that that money, flung half in contempt, half in pity, by the ruined financier, turned out to be a golden speculation. Starting with that amount, or the best part of it, I have journeyed far. It was, indeed, the seed which has given me all my harvests. If I were to meet Walter Minshull Dresslar—"

At this point in his story Standish paused and looked round upon us with a curious smile. He was clearly waiting for the question, and almost instantly some one shot it at him:

"You have met him, Standish?"

"Hush!" beamed the other. "It is better even than that." He lifted a finger to a waiter and ordered a box of Russian cigarettes. He chuckled, still beaming upon us, thoroughly enjoying the situation which he had created.

"Better than what?" demanded a listener.

"Where is Walter Dresslar?" asked another.

"Here!" was the astonishing reply.

It was Standish who made it. There was an involuntary exclamation or two, followed by an utter silence. Standish held the floor, there was no doubt about that. Conscious of it, he flushed with appreciation, with delight.

"Yes," he said, lowering his tone, "Dresslar is here, in this club. That was my principal reason for telling you the story."

Suddenly it flashed upon me that Dresslar was indeed with us, that I had flung him more than one glance. There he was, the man by the pillar! Standish had appeared not to notice him, but he had been aware of his presence all the time. Our new member was Walter Minshull Dresslar. True, he must have changed his name, but of course he would do that if he had been in prison.

The remembrance pulled me up sharp and hard. That was very much against Dresslar. What right had he to be a member of a West-End club if

ing to my story. Indeed, I hope so, for I wanted him to hear it. I thought he might disclose his identity, but he shrinks from it. In the circumstances I feel justified in doing it for him."

He turned slightly to take from the silver tray the box of Russian cigarettes which the waiter had brought. Suddenly he stood up and placed his right hand on the waiter's shoulder.

"Walter Minshull Dresslar—and a gentleman, once," said Standish with great dignity.

The attendant recoiled violently and his tray fell clattering to the floor. He put up a hand to his throat, as if he were choking.

"No!" said he, in a short, sharp, almost imperative tone. "I say no!"

"And I say yes," corrected Standish quietly. "You are Walter Dresslar. Admit it. At least you have one friend here."

"A mistake," was the now husky answer. "He died in prison."

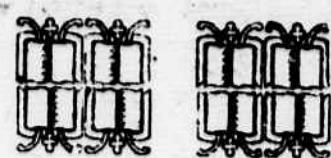
"He did not. He came out. God alone knows what he has been through since then. I think he must have suffered. But he is still a man, and we look for a man's word from his lips."

"I tell you he died," repeated the other, white to the lips. "He died years and years ago. Let him alone, Mr. Standish, sir."

Standish shrugged his shoulders and regarded us appealingly. It was a profoundly moving scene, and that we all felt it to be so was clear from the tense silence, which kept every one mute.

"I see, I see," persisted Standish very kindly, very tenderly. "Walter Minshull Dresslar, the great financier, really died when the great prison gate clang'd upon him. Of course, we all understand that much. I think I did wrong to turn up those dead years. I have to ask your forgiveness. Only—seeing you here, in this capacity, waiting upon us, the temptation to tell my story was overwhelming. Forgive me if—"

Dresslar stooped to pick up his tray, but his quivering fingers failed to grip it. He turned to go away and reeled slightly. In a moment



ter what you make it—which we raise now in strict privacy, in sincere sympathy for a man who was."

The thing was done without the least fuss. Standish gathered up three checks and twelve written promises. The members of the Oddments are not poor; and the present moment had been to one of powerful appeal. Standish announced quietly:

"This totals to £1,500. I thank you, gentlemen. Tomorrow I will show you Dresslar's receipt for 3,000. We have done nothing but—"

"Pardon me, but I should appreciate the privilege of sharing in this good action," said a voice which made me jump.

The new member, who had been standing by the pillar, approached as he spoke. He made a rapid movement with his hands.

He was not a new member at all. It was Hogg Treadways!

"A beautiful stunt. A most excellent, a most refreshing novelty," he beamed, rubbing his palms with the most delighted satisfaction. "And absolutely new to my experience—to my personal experience. Let us congratulate, gentlemen, this man, whose right name is Bowater, alias Standish, alias heaven knows what besides, and his entertaining accomplice, whose real name is Carfield, alias—well, just now he has taken the name of Walter Minshull Dresslar. Between them, by a story as false as it was undoubtedly moving, they nearly eased your superabundance of fifteen hundred pounds. Two of the smartest crooks—"

He broke off as the couple made a rush for the door.

"Two true artists; their variety stage—the world," remarked Treadways as he linked his arm in mine and we walked home together.

"And you knew them, Treadways?" I questioned, as he mused in a long silence.

"Bowater I knew, without his knowing me. I might have blackmailed him, but I was intensely curious as to just how and when he would introduce his partner Carfield, and the game they would play. Carfield came on the scene after a good spell; came as a club steward, as we have seen. I had to be careful then, for though Bowater did not know me as a criminologist and investigator, yet Carfield did, and was perfectly aware that I needed no introduction to him. Once Carfield was installed at the club I felt sure they would pull off some stunt or other speedily.

Twice I was there and nothing happened. On both occasions I was wary not to let Carfield see me; but as I wanted to be quite near to the group when the drama began, I carried a slight facial disguise and this I adjusted this evening the moment Bowater introduced the name of Walter Minshull Dresslar. I knew, then, what was coming."

Treadways nodded. "And how well those scoundrels did it, Francie," he grinned. "And they were playing a comparatively sure game. Remember that the idea of taking up a collection did not originally emanate from Bowater. He was crafty enough to let some one else start that notion. Also Carfield denied vehemently that he was Walter Dresslar. Smart, indeed. I doubt if the police can hold them for it. By the way, I wonder if we shall ever meet Dresslar, the real one?"

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RING W. LARDNER'S WEEKLY LETTER

TO the editor: Though they couldn't nobody hardly call this a medium winter I guess they never before was so much talk about spiritualisms and etc. running amuck and specially since Sir Oliver Lodge come across the old pond and begin telling us what he seen and heard and etc. but I don't generally always take other peoples hear says as they are liber to let their imagination run away with them so at 1st. I didn't pay much tension to the talk but when a person's own personal friends tells you about having experiences to say nothing about having a few of them yourself why you can't help from beginning to think that maybe after all they's something to it.

So where as I was a septi a few wks. ago you might say why lately different things has come up that has kind of made me turn turtle you might say and wile I haven't as yet come right out and joined the ranks of the occults why still and all they's a few things that I don't see how they could of happened on natural grounds and I thought maybe my army of readers might maybe be interested in hearing about them.

Well in the 1st place they's been a couple of funny incidences in regards to the telephone like for inst. the other night I was setting in the living rm. monking with a deck of cards when I thought I heard the telephone bell ring and I went out to answer it and says hello and they wasn't nobody answered me so I kind of jiggled the hook up and down and finely a lady's voice says number and I says I don't want no number, you rang here. "Well," says the voice, "They's nobody on the line."

"Well for a minute I didn't know

too but when I went there they wasn't nobody on the line." So here my friends was a incidence where TWO PEOPLE agreed that the telephone bell had rang and yet when I come to answer it they wasn't nobody there so how can you act. for a incidence like that only on a occult basis you might say.

Another incidence connected with the telephone come off in this same



"WELL," SAYS THE VOICE, "THEY'S NOBODY ON THE LINE."

house a few wks. before the above. They's a friend of ours lives in New Rochelle but hasn't lived there long enough to get their name in the suburban dream book so 1 day my Mrs. wanted to talk to this party so without thinking she called up and says they had been 7 the last time I counted.

Another day time incidence come to my tension down to the New Haven station here in Greenwich about 5 wks. ago. On this occasion I was figuring on going down to N. Y. city on the 9:55 train so I got to the Greenwich station at 10:30 but I noticed they wasn't no big crowd there like usual and the ticket window was shut up so I went out and seen the baggage

man and ast him what was the matter with the 9:55. "It's gone" was his reply. "Yes" I says "but what about the 10:20?" "That's gone too" he says.

I can't count the number of times I come down stairs in the A.M. and find that all the ash trays has dissapeared from where I left them the night before and some times tables and chairs has shifted around and of course its common knowledge that 1 of the spirits favorite sports is moving furniture though goodness knows they never lift a hand to help a family that's moving from 1 house to another.

These is some of the personal incidences that has made me look at the occult in a new light and besides witch I have heard testimony from personal friends that I know wouldn't tell me nothing that wasn't true and I only wished I had space to numerate all these evidents but suffice me to say that they's a friend a mine in N. Y. city that swears he seen a couple of members of last year's Yale foot ball team walking on the street in New Haven the other day and another friend of mine Kid Howard in Chicago gives me his word that he seen and talked with Jess Willard three days after Dempsey hit him for a home run in Toledo last July.

So as I say wile I haven't joined Sir Oliver's Lodge as yet I don't laugh out right no more when people springs talk of the supper natural and it wouldn't only take a few more incidences like the above to make this baby a believer.

RING W. LARDNR.
Greenwich, Conn., February 27.
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Famous Ship Sold as Scrap

BY CLAIR PRICE.

LONDON, February 19, 1920.

THE good memory of Old Ironsides, now spending an honorable and unseaworthy old age in Charlestown navy yard, Boston, recurs in connection with a ship auction held here recently. The U. S. Constitution, which is the name by which the Navy Department lists Old Ironsides, was built in 1797 and blazed her way to glory in the war of 1812. Subsequently the department tried to sell her, but Oliver Wendell Holmes minted the nation's indignation into his poem, "Old Ironsides." The result was that the department backed water in a hurry and Old Ironsides still exists as a national memorial.

Britain, however, had no Holmes when the British admiralty ordered the shot-riddled hulls of the S. S. River Clyde to be put up at auction. The bidding started at \$15,000 and, with advances of \$500 and \$250 at a time, the offers crept up to \$57,500, at which price the auctioneer's hammer knocked her down to a Spanish firm of marine engineers. The presence in the auction room of Commander Edward Unwin, who commanded this modern Horse of Troy at V beach, Gallipoli, in April, 1915, alone lifted the sale out of the commonplace.

Probably there has been no landing in the history of wars such as earned immortality for the River Clyde at Gallipoli. Five landings were made on the southern tip of the Gallipoli peninsula on that suicidal 25th of April, 1915. Landings in strength were made on V, W and X beaches and feints were made at S and Y beaches. The most cruel of the five was the V beach landing.

V beach was a small amphitheater-like shelf in the steep coasts of the Gallipoli peninsula, small, circular and sandy, about 300 yards across, and dominated by the ruins of Sedd-el-Bahr Castle. It was mined, wired and commanded by a murderous cross-

fire of machine guns. Through its surf and against its entrenched defenders the Dublin Fusiliers, the Munster Fusiliers, a half battalion of the Hampshire Regiment and the West Riding Field Company were to be launched at 5:30 o'clock in the morning. They not only had to land themselves, but their munitions, guns, intrenching tools, sandbags, provisions, clothing, hospitals, mules, horses, fodder—even their drinking water. The defense could have asked nothing better.

The tragic story of the rest of the Gallipoli campaign is already known. After the evacuation the Turks pillaged the beached River Clyde, and when the armistice with Turkey was finally signed on October 30, 1918, her stripped hulk still lay on the sands of V beach, a mute monument to her moment of glory.

The British admiralty succeeded in towing her to Malta, and a question was asked in the house of commons concerning her future. The admiralty replied that it would cost \$100,000 to make her seaworthy and tow her to England. There the matter apparently lay, while sentiment crystallized throughout Britain into a demand that, if it were found too expensive to fetch her home, she might at least be towed out to sea from Malta and buried in the Mediterranean with full naval honors.

But there was no Oliver Wendell Holmes in Britain to write another "Old Ironsides." So the admiralty sold the River Clyde for the scrap iron that was in her.

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Congratulated Either Way.

"Hello, old man, I hear you are going to marry Miss Swift. I congratulate you on your good taste."

"Oh, that's all off. Not going to marry at all."

"Congratulate you on your good sense."



"I HEARD A STRANGE MALE VOICE TALKING SOMEWHERE IN THE HOUSE AND THEN A KIND OF DULL HAMMERING."

Information please and it wasn't only 5 or 10 minutes when a voice come to her over the wire and says "This is Information" and my old lady fainted away as it was the 1st time she had ever had direct communication with the dead.

Well she finely got a hole of these